Tiger

Panthera tigris

There are several different types, or *subspecies*, of tigers, and their names reflect where they live geographically. Pressures from illegal killing, or *poaching*, and habitat loss have already driven three tiger subspecies to extinction (the Bali, Javan, and Caspian subspecies) while the remainder are threatened with the same fate. Today, tiger subspecies include the Indian or Bengal, Indo-Chinese, South Chinese, Sumatran, and Siberian tigers.

Tigers occupy habitats as diverse as the coniferous, mixed deciduous forests of the Russian Far East to the tropical rainforests, grasslands and marshes of India and Indonesia. In the past, they were also found around the Caspian Sea in Turkey and Iran and on the islands of Bali and Java in Indonesia.

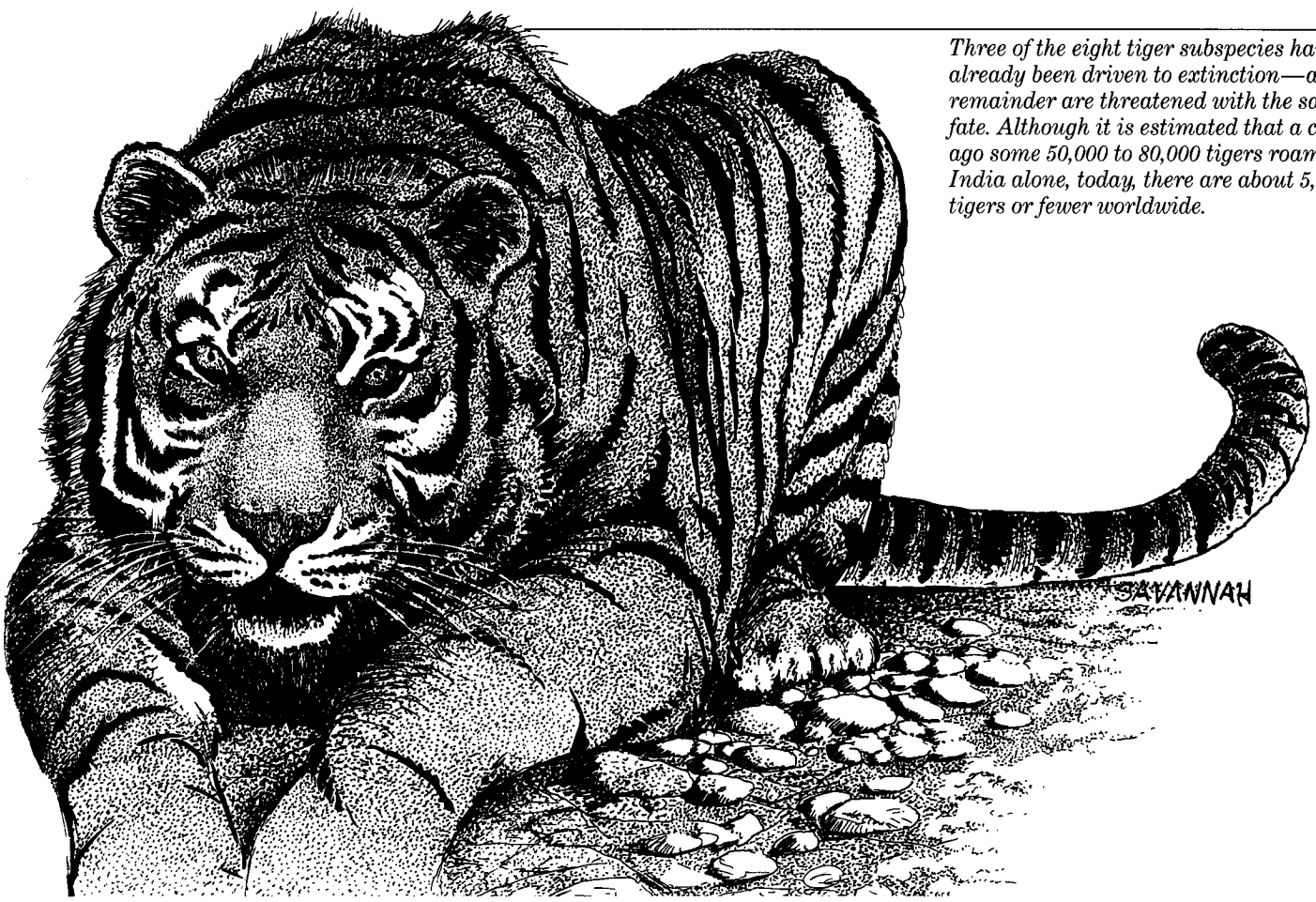
Tigers belong to the cat family, and are the biggest of the big cats, a group which includes lions, jaguars and leopards.

Siberian tigers are the largest of all of the tiger subspecies. Their size and extra thick, long coat help them survive temperatures as low as –49 degrees Fahrenheit. Siberian tigers' coats are more yellow than their tropical relatives, which are brighter in color with shorter and thinner hair. Bali tigers were the smallest of all the tigers; today, Sumatran tigers are the smallest of the living subspecies.

Although there is some variation in size among the subspecies, males generally measure about 11 feet from their nose to the tip of their tail and weigh about 400 pounds. Females are slightly smaller measuring a little more than 8 feet and weighing about 300 pounds. Males also have ruffs of hair around their cheeks.

Although their orange coats with black stripes and white patches are very conspicuous in a zoo, tigers blend in well with their natural surroundings. The black lines serve to break up their body shape in tall grasslands. These stripes also serve as identifying markers because, just like human fingerprints, no two tigers have the same pattern of stripes.

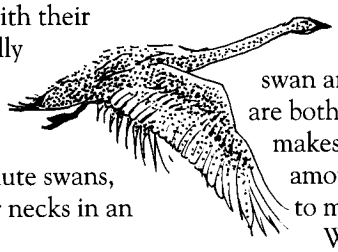
Tigers are *carnivores*, or meat-eaters. They prefer deer, antelopes, and wild pigs, but they will eat whatever they can catch. This might be animals as small as frogs, turtles, fish, or birds, or animals as large as water buffalo, elk, rhinoceros, or elephant



Three of the eight tiger subspecies have already been driven to extinction—and the remainder are threatened with the same fate. Although it is estimated that a century ago some 50,000 to 80,000 tigers roamed India alone, today, there are about 5,000 tigers or fewer worldwide.

adult size and are fully feathered. They retain their gray juvenile plumage until the second winter.

Average age at first flight is 14 to 17 weeks in Alaska and 13 to 15 weeks in other areas of their range (some of the cygnets may not survive to flight stage). Trumpeter swans fly with their long necks and legs fully extended, rather than tucked. They swim with their necks erect, in contrast to mute swans, which swim with their necks in an "S" curve.



The trumpeter swan is vulnerable to illegal shooting, collisions with power lines, and predators such as snapping turtles, great horned owls, raccoons, and minks which steal the eggs and attack the young.

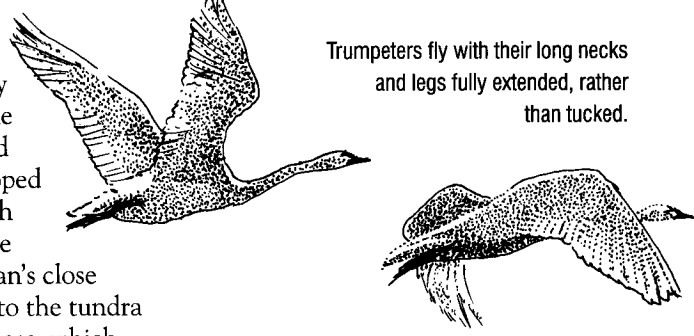
Studies have also shown that trumpeter swans may develop lead poisoning by ingesting lead shot and fishing sinkers during feeding. A relatively recent ban on lead shot for waterfowl hunting has helped significantly decrease this threat in that no new pellets are being deposited in the environment, but old pellets may remain in the sediment of lakes and wetlands for several decades.

Under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, carefully managed hunting of some migratory birds is allowed under regulations developed each year by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The trumpeter swan's close resemblance to the tundra swan and the snow goose, which are both legal game in some areas, makes it vulnerable to a certain amount of hunting pressure due to mistaken identity.

Widespread destruction and degradation of wetland areas also decreases the suitable habitat areas for the trumpeter swan.

In the early 1900s, the trumpeter was hunted nearly to extinction for its skin, feathers, meat, and eggs. Passage of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 gave protection to trumpeter swans and other birds and helped curb illegal killing.

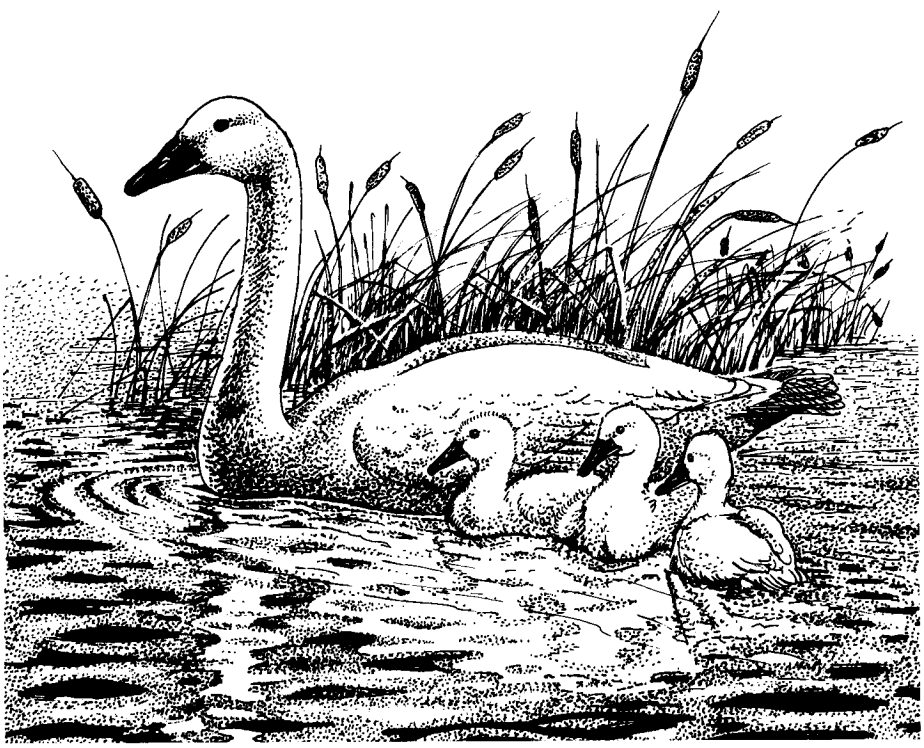
In 1932, fewer than 70 trumpeters were known to exist worldwide, at a location near Yellowstone National Park. This led to the establishment of Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge in 1935. Red Rock Lakes is located in Montana's Centennial Valley and is part of the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem. Nearly half of the known trumpeter swans in 1932 were found in this area. The area's system of hot springs provides year-round open waters where trumpeters, as well as other wildlife, find food and cover even in the coldest weather.



Trumpeters fly with their long necks and legs fully extended, rather than tucked.

Over the years, the Red Rock Lakes refuge flock served as an important source of breeding birds for reintroduction efforts in other parts of the country, primarily on other national wildlife refuges in the Midwest.

In the early 1950s, a fairly large, previously unknown population of trumpeter swans was discovered in Alaska. Today, estimates show about 16,000 trumpeter swans reside in North America, including some 13,000 in Alaska, which winter on the Pacific Coast; more than 1,600 in Canada; about 500 in the Midwest; and more than 500 in the tri-state area of Idaho, Wyoming, and Montana (including the Red Rock Lakes refuge flock).



Both the male, called a *cob*, and female, called a *pen*, build the nest and help raise the young. Called *cygnets*, young trumpeters are grayish with pink bills and weigh about 1/2 pound each. By 8 to 10 weeks, they have reached half their adult size and are fully feathered.

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